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Those Dreadful Drows

Hellen Morrison Howie



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Those Dreadful Drows

A Comedy in One Act

BY

HELLEN MORRISON HOWIE

Author of "AFTER THE MATINEE," etc.



PHILADELPHIA
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Those Dreadful Drews

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MRS. RICHARD WHITNEY	<i>who lives next door to "those dreadful Drews."</i>
JULIA	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<i>her daughter.</i>
MRS. CLARKE	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<i>her sister.</i>
MRS. ROBERTS	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<i>her friend.</i>
ANASTASIA DREW	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<i>her neighbor's daughter.</i>
RUBY	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	<i>her maid-servant.</i>

TIME :—The present.

PLACE :—A suburb of New York.

TIME IN REPRESENTATION :—One hour.

COSTUMES

MRS. WHITNEY, age about thirty-eight years, attractive morning gown, slightly negligee.

JULIA, age eighteen. Pretty, girlish dress, light and summery in style.

MRS. CLARK. }
MRS. ROBERTS. }
 } Women of about the same age as Mrs. Whitney. Handsomely tailored walking suits. Both wear hats.

ANASTASIA DREW, about eighteen or twenty years. A very stylish and handsome summer dress with big picture hat. Hat is trimmed with red roses.

RUBY. Black maid's dress with white apron.



Those Dreadful Drows

SCENE.—*Tastefully furnished interior, boxed set. At the left, toward the front, a writing-desk with telephone; at the right, near centre, a table on which are placed some hat-boxes, also books, magazines and paper-knife; at the back, to the right, a door; another to the left, both portièreed, chairs, etc., about room; MRS. RICHARD WHITNEY, an attractive woman, is discovered seated at the desk; she is writing hurriedly, a set look on her face.*

(JULIA, a pretty girl of eighteen, enters R.)

MRS. W. (*without looking up*). Has your Aunt Rachel come?

JULIA. Not yet. (*Somewhat petulantly*.) It's no use, mamma. I can't find my hat anywhere. I've looked for it high and low.

MRS. W. (*as before; indifferently*). Look again. (JULIA, *with a smothered exclamation and an impatient movement of the shoulders, opens some of the boxes on the table; she lets one fall, spilling its contents of flowers, bits of ribbons, lace, etc.* MRS. W., *who has just finished addressing two letters, turns*.) What are you doing, child?

JULIA (*picking up the box*). Looking for it.

MRS. W. Do you expect to find it there?

JULIA. No, I don't expect to find it anywhere. This is Wednesday.

MRS. W. Wednesday. What has that got to do with it?

JULIA. Have you forgotten what the palmist at Atlantic City said? That I never would have any luck on a Wednesday.

MRS. W. (*exasperated*). Julia, if you mention that palmist again, I declare I'll — (*Stops*.)

JULIA (*almost in tears*). Well, mamma, hasn't everything he said come true; didn't he tell me that we were going to move; how did he know that?

MRS. W. He didn't. I didn't myself until an hour ago.

JULIA. How about my losing something?

MRS. W. That was easy. You are always losing something.

JULIA. And about my having a disappointment? There's that visit to Alice I have had to give up on account of this moving.

MRS. W. Life is full of disappointments, as you will learn without the aid of a palmist.

JULIA. But you will admit that he must possess some sort of occult power to be able to tell me my name?

MRS. W. (*with a half smile*). Not at all. I could have told you your name.

JULIA. You are just making fun of me!

MRS. W. When a certain little maiden I know is so silly as to be gulled by the cheap cleverness of a boardwalk fakir, it is time some one made fun of her.

JULIA. But mamma——

MRS. W. (*cutting her short with a motion of the hand*). There, that will do! Run and post these letters. (JULIA *picks up some of the bits of lace and flowers that are scattered about on the floor by the table.*) Never mind that now. It is important that these should be mailed immediately.

JULIA (*taking the letters*). Father is going to feel very badly about this moving.

MRS. W. Father isn't the only one who is going to feel badly.

JULIA. You know how he loves this place.

MRS. W. It is that fact that has kept me here for five years.

JULIA. You have stood it so long——

MRS. W. (*interrupting*). Too long.

JULIA. I know. But what's the use of being in such a hurry and upsetting all our plans, and (*almost in tears*) I think it is just—just too bad. I really do!

MRS. W. (*with deliberate emphasis*). Julia, we are going to move, and at once. And the sooner you stop whining and resign yourself to the inevitable, the better.

(*Phone rings ; MRS. W. goes to the desk.*)

JULIA (*indignantly*). Whining! Mamma, I never knew you to be so—so unjust! (*Exit, R.*)

MRS. W. (*at the 'phone*). Hello! (*Pause.*) Is that you, Dick? I was just going to call you up. (*Pause.*) No, I am not your dear wife. I'm a changed woman. You wouldn't know me. I don't know myself, and our daughter looks at me with alien eyes. (*Pause.*) What is it? It's the last straw. It's the turning worm. It's the end. I can't stand it any longer, and I'm going—that's all! (*Pause.*) A joke? I hope you will think so this evening. By the way, perhaps you had better stay in town to-night. Things are going to be uncomfortable and upset here. (*Pause.*) Wild! I have no doubt you will say so. (*Pause.*) No,—not a week, nor a day. (*Pause.*) What's it all about? Oh, nothing new. Same old trouble—those dreadful Drews! (*Pause.*) I can't explain now, and please, Dick, don't try to reason with me. I'm beyond that. I've got to get away from this neighborhood—that's all there is about it, and I'm going. (*Pause.*) Yes,—to-day! (*Pause.*) Well, I'm listening. What is it? Go on. (*Pause.*) What's that? Mr. and Mrs. Tyson on from Buffalo and you are going to send her up for lunch with us. Are you? (*Sarcastically; with a change of tone.*) By all means! Delighted! With your usual judgment, foresight and discrimination, you have picked out the day from all the three hundred and sixty-five. (*In her previous tone.*) Dick Whitney, if you dare! Wait a minute! Dick (*louder*), Dick! No use. (*Hangs up receiver, walks from the desk as RUBY enters, door R.*) Well, what is it?

RUBY. Please, ma'am, there are two men at the door. They say they are packers from Bartlett's. I told them it wasn't for here. But they insist that we are going to move.

MRS. W. They're right.

RUBY (*gasping with astonishment*). To move!

MRS. W. Yes,—to move! Don't stand there gasping like a sick gold-fish. I said,—to move!

RUBY (*trying to recover herself*). Not to-day!

MRS. W. Yes, to-day! Hurry! (*Pushes RUBY before her.*) To move to-day! To move to-day!

(*They exeunt, door R.*)

(*Enter MRS. CLARKE and JULIA, door L. The former is a pleasant-faced woman with a quiet, sympathetic manner.*)

JULIA. Oh, Aunt Rachel, I'm so glad you came over. Things are in an awful mess here.

MRS. C. (*seeing the scraps on the floor*). So I see.

JULIA. We are going to move. This very day!

MRS. C. Yes. Your mother 'phoned me. Where to?

JULIA. Nowhere. (MRS. C. *smiles*.) I mean nobody knows.

MRS. C. Isn't this very sudden?

JULIA. Sudden! I should say so. Even father hasn't heard. We took our breakfast as usual——

MRS. C. (*interrupting*). That was fortunate.

JULIA. And, well, about half an hour after something happened—I don't know what—but the first thing I heard was mamma 'phoning for the packers. When I asked her what it was all about, she just said that she had made up her mind to move. And she looked so cross, I was really afraid to question her any further. I have never seen mamma act as she has done to-day. (*Appealingly*.) Can't you do something?

MRS. C. I'll try.

JULIA (*hopelessly*). Not that it will be of any use. It's fate. Houdan predicted it.

MRS. C. Houdan! Who's she?

(*Picks up one or two scraps of lace and flowers.*)

JULIA. It isn't a she. It's a he. Please don't bother about them, Aunt Rachel. That's nothing to the mess that things will be in, in a few hours. He's a palmist—the great Houdan. You must have heard of him.

MRS. C. Please remember that I have been living for several years in a remote corner of Europe, where the fame of your renowned Houding hasn't penetrated.

JULIA. Houdan. Mamma makes fun of me when I talk about him. But, Aunt Rachel, he is perfectly wonderful, and the things he has told me are simply beyond! He said I was going to lose something, and I have lost my hat, and——

MRS. C. (*interrupting*). Your hat?

JULIA. Yes. And a whole lot of other disagreeable things, and they are all coming true.

MRS. C. (*straightening a spray of green leaves*). Here's a four-leaved clover. Let me put it in your hair. It may

protect you from the dire predictions of the pessimistic Houding—Houdee.

JULIA. Houdan. Do you like my hair in this style?

MRS. C. Very much.

JULIA. To think that I went to all the trouble of having it arranged this way for my new hat!

MRS. C. (*putting the spray in JULIA's hair*). You say you have no idea what made your mother take this sudden resolution?

JULIA. No. But, of course, it is something connected with the Drews.

MRS. C. Your next door neighbors?

JULIA. Yes.

MRS. C. Why do you say "of course"?

JULIA. Because it always is. (*Puts her hand to her hair.*) Oh!

MRS. C. I beg your pardon. There! It's fixed now.

JULIA. Mamma has them on the brain. It is a perfect mania with her. Their very name gives her a spasm.

MRS. C. What's the matter with them?

JULIA. Nothing.

MRS. C. My dear, that doesn't sound reasonable.

JULIA. I know it doesn't. But it's true.

MRS. C. Is your mother the only one whom they affect so unpleasantly? Do you like them?

JULIA. No, I can't bear them.

MRS. C. Why?

JULIA. I don't know; I've never been able to tell just why.

MRS. C. This is getting interesting.

JULIA. It sounds foolish, I know. But there are other people who feel the same way about it.

MRS. C. You mean that they dislike them without knowing exactly why?

JULIA. Yes.

MRS. C. (*after a slight, thoughtful pause*). May I ask how many members compose this unusual family?

JULIA. Just two, Mrs. Drew and her daughter, Anastasia.

MRS. C. Anastasia! That name sheds a light. I can see her.

(*Folds her hands and puts on the expression of a prim old maid.*)

JULIA (*with a laugh*). Wrong! She is just my age and pretty.

MRS. C. Really?

JULIA. Really and truly. (*Sound of hammering without; after listening; in sudden panic.*) Can it be that the packers are at work already? I'll run and tell mamma you are here. And, oh! Aunt Rachel, stop her—please do!

(*Runs from the room, door L. A pause.*)

(*Enter MRS. W., door R.*)

MRS. W. (*in a relieved tone*). Oh! here you are.

(*Kisses her; during the following MRS. W. talks quietly, but the effort at self-control is at times apparent.*)

MRS. C. Yes, I'm here. Just why—I don't know. Perhaps you will explain. What has happened?

MRS. W. Nothing new. The same old story—those dreadful Drews!

MRS. C. What have they done now?

MRS. W. Nothing—as usual.

MRS. C. (*somewhat impatiently*). My dear Estelle, if I am going to understand this matter, I would like——!

MRS. W. (*interrupting, with a motion of the hand*). Before we say another word, may I ask you to walk into the adjoining room, look out of the window, and tell me what you see in Mrs. Drew's back-yard? (MRS. C. *stares*.) No, I'm not suffering from brain-storms. Do as I say.

MRS. C. (*repeating*). I'm to walk into the adjoining room, look out of the window, and tell you what I see in Mrs. Drew's back-yard. It sounds like a game.

MRS. W. It is a game, and I have lost. (*Leads MRS. C. toward door R.; MRS. C. leaves the room with the air of one who is giving in to a caprice; MRS. W. stands inside the doorway; after a pause.*) Well, what do you see? (MRS. C.'s *voice is heard in the distance.*) A maid hanging out clothes. I saw other maids hanging out clothes. Is there nothing peculiar about this particular maid? (MRS. C.'s *voice as before.*) Oh! She looks like Betty, my cook, does she?

MRS. C. (*entering R.*). Why, it is Betty.

MRS. W. You are good at games, I see. (*Dryly.*) You guessed it right away.

MRS. C. You don't mean to say that the servant who has been in our family for so many years has actually left you and gone to work for the Drews?

MRS. W. It looks that way, doesn't it?

(*They seat themselves.*)

MRS. C. When did she go?

MRS. W. I don't know. Last week she went home to see her mother. To-day—she is next door.

MRS. C. And you didn't know anything about this change?

MRS. W. Not until I saw her in that yard a couple of hours ago.

MRS. C. (*after a slight, thoughtful pause; with some heat*). I call it unprincipled on the part of your neighbors to bribe a girl as she must have ——!

MRS. W. (*interrupting*). Mrs. Drew unprincipled! How little you know her.

MRS. C. Of course, I don't know her. I've been away for three years and all this is new to me. But of one thing I'm sure—she bribed Betty, or she never would have gone—and it's all wrong!

MRS. W. My dear, Mrs. Drew is never wrong.

MRS. C. (*moving impatiently in her chair*). Fiddlesticks! Nobody is perfect.

MRS. W. Except Mrs. Drew.

MRS. C. Then if she's all right—what's the matter with her? Will you kindly explain?

MRS. W. It is a case where explanation doesn't explain. You have to live next door to it. All I know is that Mrs. Drew will probably be in here to-day to tell me that she doesn't wish to have Betty—that she never has wished to have Betty—that she is trying in every possible way to get rid of Betty—but that Betty absolutely refuses to be got rid of—begging on bended knees for the privilege of serving such a perfect mistress. And the worst of it is—it will be true, every word of it!

MRS. C. You don't mean to say that Betty was actually longing ——

MRS. W. (*interrupting*). To work for Mrs. Drew instead of me? Can you doubt it? I believe now that every time she went into my neighbor's blue and white kitchen, she was secretly wishing to be queen of such an attractive

kingdom. That every time she did up Julia's lingerie, she regretted she wasn't fondly pressing Anastasia's fluffy ruffles instead.

MRS. C. Why, the woman's influence seems almost hypnotic.

MRS. W. Chaotic—I call it. (*RUBY enters door R., holding a tray, on which rests a bowl covered with a napkin; MRS. W. goes to her.*) What is this?

RUBY (*somewhat apprehensively*). Mrs. Drew sent it in.

MRS. W. Oh!

RUBY. It is some sort of dessert. I suppose she thought we would be very busy, seeing it was moving day, and with Betty gone.

MRS. W. How did she know it was moving day; did you tell her?

RUBY (*hastily; with some trepidation*). No, ma'am. That is—not exactly. Betty called over to me a few minutes ago.

MRS. W. (*interrupting; witheringly*). Just so. That will do.

RUBY. Please, ma'am, what will I do with it?

(*Indicates the tray.*)

MRS. W. (*her forced composure giving way; raising her voice*). What will you do with it? Anything you please. Give it to the poor! Feed it to the dogs! Throw it in the street! Only take it out of my sight!

RUBY (*with a frightened gasp; backing from the room, R.*). Yes, ma'am.

MRS. C. (*remonstrating*). Estelle! Such a scene! I'm surprised at you. I wouldn't act like that no matter how angry I felt.

MRS. W. Will you rent this house for a year? I'd like to note the effect of propinquity on your boasted equanimity.

MRS. C. (*coldly*). My dear sister, I defy Mrs. Drew or any one else to stir me into giving an exhibition of either nerves or temper, and I beg of you to control yourself before you say or do something for which you will be sorry.

MRS. W. Oh! I'll control myself. (*Almost fiercely.*) Only I hope, for my own sake, as well as hers, that Mrs. Drew won't come in to-day—that's all!

MRS. C. (*shocked*). Estelle! I don't know you in this mood!

MRS. W. I don't know myself. When I moved in here, I think, I hope I had some claim to the title of lady. To-day I am a savage,—worse—I feel like the direct descendant of one of those anthropoid tribes who chased each other through the tangle of primeval forests and gave each other neighborly taps on the head with stone axes!

MRS. C. (*concerned*). You must be ill.

MRS. W. I am. Temperature one hundred and five.

(*'Phone rings.*)

(*JULIA enters, door L.*)

JULIA. Mamma, please don't talk so loudly; they'll hear you next door.

MRS. W. I don't care if they do! (*JULIA looks in helpless appeal at MRS. C., who motions her to be silent; MRS. W., at the 'phone.*) Hello! Who is this? (*Pause.*) Mr. Lansing, the real estate man? Oh! (*Pause.*) So you have got a house for us. That's good. I was afraid I would have to store my furniture and go to boarding. (*Pause.*) Too far away? No, you can't get far enough away to suit me.

(*JULIA is about to protest; MRS. C. goes to her.*)

JULIA (*aside to MRS. C.*). Did you hear that? I suppose we are going to get a home in some vast wilderness. How cheerful!

MRS. W. (*as before*). Out of repair? Never mind. We can attend to all that afterward.

JULIA (*as before*). Any old thing is good enough for us!

MRS. W. (*as before*). Damp and malarious? Well, of course, that isn't pleasant. But I have found that there are worse things in a neighborhood than malaria, and if that's the only objection —

MRS. C. (*interrupting*). Estelle! Would you actually jeopardize the health of your family for the sake of —

MRS. W. (*cutting her short with a motion of the hand; as before*). You say that we can move in right away? (*Pause.*) Very well; I'll take it.

JULIA (*protesting*). Mamma! (*Appeals to MRS. C.*) Aunt Rachel—please!

MRS. C. (*going to MRS. W.*). Estelle, what folly! At least let some of us go and investigate before deciding on the place.

MRS. W. (*unheeding; as before*). Where did you say it was? What Terrace? (*Pause.*) Drew Terrace! Did I understand you to say Drew—(*spelling*) D-r-e-w? (MRS. C. and JULIA *exchange incredulous and amused glances; pause.*) In this case there happens to be a great deal in a name, and I wouldn't have a house on that street if I never got one—do you understand? (*Pause.*) No. I'm sorry. (*Pause.*) Impossible—quite. (*Pause.*) No; thank you. Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver; without looking at them.*) You're laughing, I know.

MRS. C. We are trying very hard not to.

JULIA (*going to MRS. W., who is leaving the room*). Mamma, you must admit it was funny.

MRS. W. (*with a twist of the mouth; looking somewhat shamefaced*). Yes, I must admit it was rather funny.

(*Leaves the room, door R.; MRS. C. and JULIA hide their faces in their handkerchiefs; they look at each other, smiling broadly.*)

JULIA. Wasn't it rich? But my, what a narrow escape.

MRS. C. Where is this place—this Drew Terrace?

JULIA. It's a filled-in swamp on the other side of the town. There is an old mansion there called "The House in the Marsh."

MRS. C. Doubtless the very place.

JULIA. Yes, and you may judge of the condition into which mamma has worked herself, when she would even consider taking such a place. The very thought of it makes me shiver.

MRS. C. The name was a queer coincidence.

JULIA (*laughing*). Yes. (*Imitates her mother's voice.*) Did you say Drew—(*spelling*) D-r-e-w? I'll never say there is nothing in a name after this.

(*Enter MRS. ROBERTS, door L.; she is a fluent talker, with pleasant, easy manners.*)

MRS. R. (*as she enters*). Tell me the joke, please.

JULIA (*jumping up and running to her*). Oh, Mrs. Roberts, I'm so glad you came over!

MRS. R. (*to* MRS. C.). Mrs. Clarke! This is delightful. (*They shake hands warmly.*) When did you arrive?

MRS. C. I was sent for this morning; a sort of hurry call.

MRS. R. I see.

JULIA (*to* MRS. R.). You have heard the news?

MRS. R. Yes. Your mother 'phoned me. Where is she?

JULIA. Mamma? On the rampage.

MRS. C. (*reprovingly*). Julia!

JULIA. I can't help it, Aunt Rachel. You don't know what I have had to put up with this morning. (*Voice off L., calling.*) There's mamma now. Excuse me.

(*Goes up L.*)

MRS. R. Just one moment. Before I forget. I met Mrs. Earle. She would like you to telephone and let her know if you are going to take part in the play at the Westchester Woman's Club next month.

JULIA (*ruefully*). I'll have to. Though there is nothing in the world that I wouldn't rather do. But yesterday mamma heard that in the event of my refusal the rôle was to be assigned to Anastasia Drew. That settled it!

(*Runs off, door L.*)

MRS. C. Drew! Drew! I have heard nothing but that name all morning. I'm beginning to hate the sound of it.

MRS. R. Already? (*MRS. C. takes MRS. R.'s wraps and places them on a chair near the door.*) Thank you.

MRS. C. Yes—already. And now before we go any further, will you kindly sit down here (*pushing forward a chair*) and tell me all about them?

MRS. R. (*with a slight laugh; seating herself*). I wish you had asked me something easy.

MRS. C. (*drawing up a chair and seating herself*). Now don't evade. What is the matter with them?

MRS. R. Nothing—and everything.

MRS. C. That's the sort of an answer I've been getting all morning. As for Estelle—she can't be calm long enough to be coherent. She is really beside herself.

MRS. R. I can sympathize with her. I've been there. And you would be just the same under the circumstances.

MRS. C. Never. But tell me about them. Give me some facts.

MRS. R. Facts? That isn't easy. For you see the whole matter is sort of psychic. Still I can give you one fact, and a very substantial one, you'll admit. I lived next door to Mrs. Drew for two years—in number forty. When I moved into that house, I weighed one hundred and sixty pounds. The day I moved out I was down to one hundred and ten. That's one fact for you—fifty pounds.

MRS. C. (*amused*). Mrs. Drew in a new rôle—the great cure for obesity. How did she do it?

MRS. R. She didn't do it. But it is significant that it happened when I resided in her immediate neighborhood.

MRS. C. More facts, please.

MRS. R. (*after a slight, thoughtful pause*). How would you like to live next door to a person who led a sort of charmed life—who seemed to be immune to the petty trials, worries and pin-pricks of existence—who never got a thorn with her roses, nor had her bread fall on the buttered side?

MRS. C. (*with a smile*). Why, I don't know. You see, I never lived next door to—to ——— (*Searches for a word.*)

MRS. R. Perfection. You may congratulate yourself. For I assure you, it is a tremendous strain on ordinary human nature. (*Significantly.*) I couldn't tell you how often I have felt that this world was not the place for Mrs. Drew.

MRS. C. I think my sister is feeling that way this morning—only more so. The latest is, that Betty the cook has gone over to the Drew camp.

MRS. R. No! Really?

MRS. C. Yes. And I am very much of the opinion that Mrs. Drew has used some underhand means to ———

MRS. R. (*interrupting*). Which shows how little you know the lady in question. Mrs. Drew was never known to do anything wrong.

MRS. C. Of course, those are only phrases. You don't expect me to believe them. It's absurd! I'll warrant she is no better than any one else. In fact, I'm sure she isn't.

MRS. R. The Drew microbe is working already.

MRS. C. I must confess that I am beginning to have a feeling that is—well—the reverse of friendly. But go on, please.

MRS. R. There is nothing to tell, except that all the unpleasant things seemed to happen to me and others in the neighborhood, while Mrs. Drew, in some miraculous way, escaped. For instance, the summer we had that dreadful storm, Mrs. Drew's house was the only one on the block that escaped uninjured. Of course, there was a reason for it. My husband had it all arranged like a geometrical problem. Our house was just at the proper angle to shield hers from the blast, etc., etc. But it didn't make me feel any better when I got out the next morning to find that there was hardly a leaf off her rubber plant, while my garden was a ruin and my front awning a shred.

MRS. C. But she couldn't help the storm. She wasn't to blame for that.

MRS. R. Of course not. And I tell you, she never is to blame for anything. But I blamed her just the same. And had you lived next door to her that morning, you would have done as I did. It isn't reasonable. But it's human. You see if something disagreeable had happened to her—just once—one could have borne it. But no, with her, immunity was the invariable rule. If every child in the neighborhood was shaking himself with the whooping-cough, do you suppose that anything so undignified as a whoop ever came out of little Anastasia? Oh, dear, no! She played with the others right along, but never took it. The same with the measles. Not a youngster escaped—except Anastasia. No horrid rash marred the beauty of that alabaster forehead. Then the day that Johnnie Smith got burned—Anastasia Drew put him up to the mischief and was standing right by when the thing exploded, but do you suppose she got hurt? Oh, no!

MRS. C. Mrs. Drew's chief crime seems to be the fact of her remarkable good fortune. Even the laws of nature seem to suspend their operations out of consideration for her feelings.

MRS. R. Exactly. I was always prepared, after a thunder-storm had spoiled our milk, to have Mrs. Drew's Katy lean across the hedge and tell our Mary that their milk was perfectly sweet.

MRS. C. (*amused*). Enough to turn the milk of human kindness itself.

MRS. R. It did. I assure you I was thoroughly sour on sweet Mrs. Drew.

MRS. C. Is she sweet?

MRS. R. Oh, saccharine—with a very high polish on her manners. But I don't like her, and in that I assure you I am not unique.

MRS. C. Why? How does she affect you?

MRS. R. As I have heard that the electric bath does some people—she leaves me prickly all over.

MRS. C. Oh!

MRS. R. It isn't anything that she does or says, but by some subtle process she puts you in the wrong—makes you feel insignificant and depressed, or raging in a baffled sort of way. (MRS. W. *enters unseen*.) When I bid her good-bye, I may be, I hope I am, outwardly smiling, but inwardly I am ravening wolves!

MRS. C. I think I begin to understand.

MRS. W. (*advancing*). Oh, no. You have to live next door to understand.

MRS. R. (*kissing* MRS. W.). So you are going at last?

MRS. W. Yes. If I stay she will hypnotize me into forgiving her, as she has done for the past five years. I am going, if for nothing else than to indulge in the luxury of hating her.

MRS. C. My dear!

MRS. R. Let her give vent to it. It will do her good. I've been there.

(*Enter* JULIA, *with a sheet of paper in her hand*.)

JULIA. It's no use, mamma. I can't take this part. "The Unwilling Soubrette" is beyond me.

MRS. W. The Unwilling Soubrette, did you say? I should think you'd fill the rôle to perfection.

(MRS. R. *looks over* JULIA'S *shoulder at the paper*.)

MRS. C. (*aside to* MRS. W.). Don't talk like that. You will discourage her completely. You are upset, and she is reflecting your mood.

MRS. W. Indeed? Then I must say she is a powerful reflector.

MRS. R. Recite them, and we will judge whether the lines are beyond you or not. And remember you are working for a good cause. For if ever a club needed a club house, the Westchester Woman's Club surely does.

MRS. C. (*to* JULIA, *coaxingly*). Come, let's hear them.

(JULIA *walks unwillingly to the front of the stage and recites with a very dissatisfied air and tone.*)

I

I don't wish to be a soubrette,
And appear upon a stage,
For histrionic honors I don't pine.
I can't sing a ditty,
So's to make it all the rage,
I haven't any talent in that line.

II

I'm a plain and simple maiden,
Without any airs or frills,
Who shudders at the word publicity.
To see my name upon a program,
Doesn't give me any thrills;
I hate these silly stunts for charity.

III

This craze for seeing everything,
Done up into a play,
Is enough to make a thoughtful man shed tears.
The money squandered every week,
Upon the matinée,
Would keep the poor in bread and meat for years.

IV

It's the never-failing topic,
In the cars and on the street,
Of stars who shine in stageland still they talk.
They know all about the favorites,
From their false hair to their feet,
And can tell you how they stand, or sit or walk.

V

"Have you seen the Russian actress,
In that weird old Ibsen play?
You don't like her? I think she's simply fine!
Mrs. Fiske,—oh, yes,—an artist,
In her own peculiar way,
Of course, she's good,—but Barrymore for mine."

VI

Maud Adams in her latest sketch,
 Is Mignonne, charming, dear,
 Did you ever notice Kyrle Bellew's eyes?
 They do say Lillian Russell
 Is sixty—if a year,
 It's wonderful! She ought to get a prize!

VII

Do you like Maxine Elliott
 In that piece she's playing in?
 In London town her beauty made a stir.
 Isn't Julia Marlowe perfect
 With that dimple in her chin?
 I'd give the world if I could act like her.

VIII

Now, I don't wish to be an actress,
 And I haven't any craze
 To appear before the footlights, and all that.
 For I can find my happiness
 In very simple ways,
 A book—a flower—or, yes—even a hat.

IX

I'm just ordinary Julia,
 And that isn't Juliet,
 I don't appreciate dramatic art.
 And if you wish to make me happy,
 You will very promptly get
 Another, bolder maid, to take my part.

X

And if Westchester Women
 Should never get a club,
 They can't make a living picture out of me!
 Before I'd act in vaudeville,
 I'd bake, or brew, or scrub,
 Or study osteopathy.

MRS. R. (*clapping*). Splendid!

MRS. C. Well done!

JULIA. You just say that to be polite. But you all know that Anastasia Drew could do it a thousand times better.

(*Exit, door L.*)

MRS. W. Poor child! Between her disappointment over having such a mother, and her disappointment over the loss of her new hat —

MRS. R. (*interrupting*). Her new hat? Not that dream of tulle and roses you were telling me about?

MRS. C. The same. That dream, like a good many other dreams, has vanished.

MRS. C. It must be in the house somewhere.

MRS. W. That's what I tell Julia, but she insists —
(*JULIA enters L., carrying a hat-box between her hands.*)
There! So you did find it?

JULIA (*in a peculiar tone*). Yes; I found it.

MRS. W. You see nobody touched it.

JULIA (*placing the box on the table and taking off the cover*). It doesn't look as though it had been tampered with.

MRS. C. What color is it?

JULIA. Brown.

MRS. W. It is one of those confections that the French call *delicieux*—good enough to eat.

JULIA. Good enough to eat. Yes, that's just how it looks.

(*Takes a large chocolate cake from the box and places it on the table; MRS. W. stands staring at it.*)

MRS. C. A chocolate cake.

MRS. R. How perfectly ridiculous!

MRS. W. There is some queer mistake here.

(*RUBY enters R.*)

RUBY. Miss Holt is in the library and would like to speak to Miss Julia.

MRS. W. Ruby, come here. (*RUBY advances, somewhat reluctantly; MRS. W. points to the cake.*) What does this mean?

RUBY (*gazing stupidly at the cake*). Why, that's the

cake you told me to take round to Mrs. Ainslee's for her fair.

MRS. W. Yes. Well, why didn't you take it?

RUBY. I did.

MRS. R. This is a case of having your cake and eating it, too.

MRS. W. Don't be idiotic; don't you see that you didn't!

RUBY. But I did, ma'am. I took a box (*pointing*) just like that.

JULIA (*excitedly; taking RUBY by the arm*). You don't mean to say that you took my hat? Oh, I'm sure she has! (*To MRS. W.*) You see, the palmist was right.

MRS. W. Julia, if you will kindly go and see Gertrude, we will try to unravel this without your assistance. (*MRS. C. leads JULIA, expostulating, to door L. JULIA exits.*) Now, Ruby, try to think calmly. Which box did you take to Mrs. Ainslee's?

RUBY. That one.

MRS. W. That's impossible. (*Struck by a sudden thought.*) Unless it was sent back.

RUBY. No, ma'am; it wasn't sent back.

MRS. W. Then how is it here?

RUBY. I don't know.

MRS. C. (*to MRS. W.*). Was Julia's hat in a box similar to this one?

MRS. W. It wasn't unlike.

MRS. R. Then Mrs. Ainslee has the hat. But how did the hat get to the pantry, and the cake to the wardrobe?

MRS. W. The hat had just come from Mme. Ribeau's, and was on the table in the hall. The cake I arranged in this box so as to protect the icing, and left it in the butler's pantry. You remember, Ruby, I told you where you would find it?

RUBY. Yes, ma'am; but I—I—— (*Stops.*)

MRS. W. I see by your face that you took the other instead. That settles it. (*To MRS. R. and MRS. C.*) This seems to be my lucky day.

MRS. C. What are you going to do about it?

MRS. R. You had better 'phone to Mrs. Ainslee at once.

MRS. W. It is too late now. They had a millinery booth

at the fair, and, of course, the hat is sold. The palmist was right, after all.

RUBY (*struck by a sudden thought; taking a note from the bib of her apron*). Please, ma'am, here's a note Mrs. Ainslee's coachman brought a few minutes ago.

MRS. W. (*taking it*). Why didn't you give it to me at once? It might have saved all this discussion. (*Dismisses RUBY with a motion of the hand; exit RUBY, R.*) Such monumental stupidity! (*Opens the note.*) With your permission. (*As she reads, her expression is a mixture of incredulity and anger.*) This is too much!

(*Sinks into a chair.*)

MRS. R. What is it?

MRS. C. What's the matter?

MRS. W. (*to MRS. C.*). Will you kindly close the portières?

MRS. C. (*wonderingly*). Certainly. (*Closes them.*)

MRS. W. (*handing MRS. R. the note*). Read it, please.

MRS. R. Aloud? (*MRS. W. nods. MRS. R. reads.*) "My dear Mrs. Whitney: You will be pleased to hear that our fair, held for the benefit of the Westchester Woman's Club, was a great financial success. And, thanks to you, my booth netted more than any of the others. When I wrote you that anything from a cake to an Easter bonnet would be acceptable, I never dreamed that you would take me up so generously. The chapeau was perfect. Congratulate your milliner for me, and ask her, please, where she got those lovely roses. It was bought by your neighbor, Mrs. Drew ——"

MRS. C. Mrs. Drew!

MRS. R. (*reading*). "—— at a price which was high enough to suit even yours truly. And I couldn't help thinking when I saw the hat on Anastasia's bright curls, that there, and there only, would the chic confection fulfil its highest destiny. Gratefully yours, Anna B. Ainslee." (*Folds the note.*) So the Drews are on top once more!

MRS. C. (*indignant and angry*). Anastasia's bright curls, indeed! I would get back that hat if it was the last thing I did on earth!

MRS. R. (*to MRS. W.*). How delightfully human your sister is after all.

MRS. W. Yes; I don't need to rave any more. She'll do it for me.

MRS. C. (*to* MRS. W.). Aren't you going to explain matters? It isn't too late.

MRS. W. What's the use? Why not leave it, where, as Mrs. Ainslee with such fine discrimination remarks, it is fulfilling its highest destiny. You can't imagine what a comfort it is to know, that if there is any one in this town who will look better in that hat than my Julia, it is Anastasia Drew.

MRS. R. I can appreciate how comforting that thought must be. (*To* MRS. C.) Then you must remember that, after all, it wasn't Mrs. Drew's fault. She didn't know the hat was Julia's.

MRS. C. I believe she knew all about it. It's a plot—a malicious plot.

MRS. R. (*to* MRS. W.). Your sister is getting there.

MRS. W. Yes. Pretty soon she will be where I was half an hour ago.

MRS. R. It is really wonderful the effect that poor, dear, innocent Mrs. Drew has on people.

MRS. C. Innocent, indeed! You'll never make me believe that!

MRS. W. (*listening*). I think I hear Julia. (*To* MRS. C.) Please don't let her come in here just now. That explanation is going to be awkward. I'd like to postpone it as long as possible. (MRS. C. *exits*, L.) It's worth the hat to see Rachel so worked up. Would you have believed it of her? Do you know, the moment she began to get excited, a sudden calm fell on my spirit.

MRS. R. I understand. You felt soothed—sustained. That's how I used to feel when my husband would use strong language, and call Mrs. Drew an old crocodile.

MRS. W. I wish my husband would call her something for me.

(*Enter* RUBY, R.)

RUBY (*to* MRS. W.). A lady wishes to see you.

(*Exit*, R.)

MRS. W. (*after a start of dismayed recollection*). Harriet!

MRS. R. (*going to her*). Here I am, Another shock. This seems to be a sort of continuous performance. Well, I'll stand by you, whatever it is.

MRS. W. (*lowering her voice*). It's Mrs. Tyson!

MRS. R. Is it—is she—very formidable?

MRS. W. Yes; especially on a moving day. Dick 'phoned she was coming, and I forgot all about it. In fact, I thought he was joking. Well, one good joke deserves another. He will get mine to-night.

MRS. R. Poor Dick! Is there anything I can do for you?

MRS. W. Yes; stay and see me through the day.

MRS. R. Willingly; you know I love excitement.

MRS. W. (*putting her hands to her head*). How's my hair?

MRS. R. It isn't quite as smooth as Anastasia's marcelle, but it will do. (*Exit MRS. W., door R.; MRS. R. takes a book and settles herself to read; enter MRS. C., door L.*) Well, did you break the news to Julia?

MRS. C. I didn't see her. But I'll tell you what I did see. I saw a moving van in front of the Drews'. Can it be that they are going to move?

MRS. R. Vain hope! Families may come and families may go, but the Drews stay on forever. The van is meant for this house, but everything goes to the Drews first.

MRS. C. Where's Estelle?

MRS. R. A visitor has just been announced—a Mrs. Tyson.

MRS. C. Mrs. Archibald Tyson?

MRS. R. I don't know whether she was guilty of marrying an Archibald or not, but I wouldn't be surprised.

(*'Phone rings; MRS. C. goes to it.*)

MRS. C. (*at the 'phone*). Hello! (*Pause.*) How do you do, Dick? (*Pause.*) Yes, I came over this morning. (*Pause.*) Estelle is engaged at present with Mrs. Tyson. (*Pause.*) What's that? Mrs. Tyson has just boarded the train for Boston? How can that be?

MRS. R. Ubiquitous Mrs. Tyson!

MRS. C. (*at the 'phone*). Just a moment, please. (*To MRS. R.*) You said Mrs. Tyson, didn't you?

MRS. R. Yes; but I didn't say Mrs. Archibald Tyson.

MRS. C. There is only one Mrs. Tyson.

MRS. R. I was beginning to think there were two.

MRS. C. (*at the 'phone*). Hello! (*Pause.*) Of course, there must be some mistake. (*Pause; laughs.*) I'll take your word for it. (*Pause.*) To call you up in half an hour? Very well; I'll tell her. Good-bye.

(*Hangs up receiver.*)

MRS. R. Now which Mrs. Tyson is in the drawing-room; and which Mrs. Tyson boarded the train for Boston; and where is Archibald that he isn't looking after his wife? (*Enter MRS. W.*) Has your visitor gone?

MRS. W. Yes; a harmless book canvasser.

MRS. R. So there is only one Mrs. Tyson after all, and your husband has just 'phoned that she is on her way to Boston.

MRS. W. Thank goodness!

MRS. C. A book agent!

MRS. W. Yes; and in my relief, I subscribed in my husband's name to a work in five volumes entitled, "American Humorists"; also three magazines and a compendium of art needlework, and informed the bewildered female that if she would get up a booklet telling me how to get rid of objectionable neighbors, I would buy it on the spot. (*Toward the last of the above ANASTASIA DREW appears in the doorway; she is young, pretty and fashionably dressed; she wears a large hat trimmed with roses; MRS. C., who is first to see ANASTASIA, gives MRS. W. an admonishing touch.*) What's the matter; what have I said? (*Sees ANASTASIA, gives a slight gasp; aside, before going to meet her.*) Julia's hat! (*Aloud.*) How do you do, Miss Drew?

ANASTASIA (*advancing*). Pardon me, but I heard voices. And as the maid seemed busy with some workmen in the library, I took the liberty of coming in.

MRS. W. Certainly. (*Introduces.*) My sister, Mrs. Clarke. (*MRS. C. bows stiffly.*) Mrs. Roberts, of course, you know.

ANASTASIA. Yes, indeed. We are old friends; aren't we, Mrs. Roberts? (*Shakes hands.*)

MRS. R. (*dryly*). We have known each other a good many years.

MRS. W. (*offering ANASTASIA a chair*). Won't you be seated?

ANASTASIA (*seating herself*). I really can't stay a mo-

ment. (*The others seat themselves ; MRS. C. near MRS. W.*)
We are all upset at our house.

MRS. W. We are in the same condition.

ANASTASIA. So I see. How queer that we both should be moving at the same time.

MRS. W. (*starting forward in her chair*). At the same time ! You don't mean to say that you are going to move ?

ANASTASIA (*nodding*). I knew it would surprise you.

MRS. W. Surprise me ! Why, I certainly can't grasp —— ! Why didn't you tell me —— ? If I had known —— ! It seems too goo—too sudden !

ANASTASIA. It was sudden—at the last. Though we have known about it for some time, but didn't wish to say anything until we were absolutely sure. Now it is settled. But I must say I think it was very inconsiderate of grandpa !

MRS. R. Is your grandfather on here ?

ANASTASIA. On here ? Why, he's dead.

MRS. R. Indeed ! I'm very sorry to hear that.

MRS. W. (*following her own train of thought*). Are you sure ?

ANASTASIA (*in some astonishment*). I beg your pardon ?

MRS. W. I mean about the moving. There is no mistake ?

(*MRS. C. coughs slightly.*)

ANASTASIA. Mistake ! I wish there were. As for mamma, she felt so badly at the thought of going, that she was almost on the point of refusing grandpa's money, and staying here.

MRS. R. How rash !

MRS. W. It would be madness ! Please don't let her think of such a thing !

ANASTASIA. Oh, she has fully made up her mind to go.

MRS. W. But she might change it. Wouldn't it be terrible if after all —— !

(*MRS. C. picks her handkerchief from the floor and puts it into MRS. W.'s hand.*)

MRS. R. (*interrupting ; hastily*). Do I understand that your grandfather has made your inheritance conditional on your living in —— (*Stops.*)

ANASTASIA. In Kalamazoo. Isn't it awful !

MRS. W. Kalamazoo ! Did you hear that, Rachel,—Kalamazoo ! (*To ANASTASIA.*) How far is that ?

ANASTASIA. About eight hundred miles, I should judge.

MRS. W. Eight hundred miles! Think of it! And you are going to stay there for good? Do you know I can hardly believe it!

ANASTASIA (*in a discontented tone*). It will seem very strange.

MRS. W. You'll get used to it. The West is a fine place for young people.

ANASTASIA (*looking surprised*). I understood that you didn't like the West.

MRS. W. (*quickly*). Oh, yes, I do! I'll never run down the West again—never! I——

MRS. R. (*interrupting, hastily; to ANASTASIA*). When do you expect to leave?

MRS. W. (*eagerly*). Yes, when do you expect to leave?

ANASTASIA. Just as soon as we can arrange matters. Mamma does not believe in procrastination.

MRS. W. That's right. Delays are dangerous.

MRS. R. Mrs. Whitney believes that if a thing—no matter how disagreeable—has to be done, the sooner it is done the better.

MRS. W. Yes, the sooner the better.

(*A slight, somewhat embarrassed pause; MRS. R. and MRS. C. exchange amused and helpless glances.*)

MRS. C. (*to MRS. W.*). Perhaps there is something we can do to help Mrs. Drew.

MRS. W. (*to ANASTASIA*). Yes; if there is anything we can do to accelerate—facilitate matters, we will gladly do it.

MRS. R. Gladly——

ANASTASIA. Thank you. I—in fact the object of my visit this morning was to ask you to use your influence with mamma, and persuade her to stay——

MRS. W. (*interrupting; dismayed*). Persuade her to stay! My dear child, I have no influence with your mother. And in a matter of so much importance, I would hardly——

ANASTASIA (*interrupting*). Oh, I mean just to persuade her to rest for a week or two before beginning that tiresome journey. She has a frightful cold, and is really in no condition to travel.

MRS. W. Oh! for a week or two. Well, if it is only for a week or two—— (MRS. C., *who has been toying with a*

paper-knife, drops it with a sharp sound; MRS. W. turns to MRS. C.) Eh?

MRS. R. (*to ANASTASIA*). I don't think you need feel apprehensive. I have noticed that for a cold there is nothing so beneficial as change of air.

MRS. W. Yes, indeed. (*To MRS. C.*) You remember what Atlantic City did for you.

(*MRS. C. nods; lays the paper-knife on the table.*)

MRS. R. Of course Atlantic City and Kalamazoo are two very different —

MRS. W. (*interrupting*). The result is the same.

ANASTASIA. So you think it would be perfectly safe for mamma to travel?

MRS. W. Perfectly. (*To MRS. R.*) Don't you?

MRS. R. I think she might risk it.

ANASTASIA. Thank you. I feel quite reassured. (*Rises.*) And now I must go. Mamma doesn't know where I am.

(*JULIA appears in the doorway, door L.; MRS. C. goes to her.*)

JULIA (*in a smothered voice*). My hat!

(*MRS. C. seizes her arm; they both disappear behind the portière, L.*)

ANASTASIA (*turning her head*). What was that?

MRS. W. (*hastily*). Don't hurry away. Let me help you to some cake. (*Goes to the table.*)

ANASTASIA (*to MRS. R.*). Didn't you hear something?

MRS. R. Yes; I believe I did.

ANASTASIA (*to MRS. W., who has seized the paper-knife and is about to thrust it into the cake*). Oh, no, thank you. Please don't cut it. I couldn't possibly.

MRS. W. Really?

ANASTASIA. Really. (*MRS. W. lays down the paper-knife.*) I must be going. Good-bye.

(*Shakes hands with MRS. R.*)

MRS. W. (*shaking hands*). Good-bye. And please tell your mother she may call upon me for anything she needs. Can't I give you something for the trip—steamer-chair, rugs?

MRS. R. My dear, it isn't a sea voyage.

MRS. W. Of course not! How stupid of me! Well, if there is anything you need —

ANASTASIA. Thank you; and before I leave, may I ask you to believe that in the matter of the maid—Betty, we are entirely innocent. Mamma wouldn't —

MRS. W. (*interrupting*). Of course, she wouldn't! I said as much to my sister. Pray, don't mention it.

(ANASTASIA and MRS. W. leave the room, door R.; their voices die away in the distance.)

MRS. R. (*going to door L., pulling back the portière, and calling softly*). Julia!

(*Enter JULIA, L., followed by MRS. C.*)

JULIA. Did she hear me? I couldn't help it.

MRS. R. She heard something. But I'm sure she didn't understand.

JULIA. My hat! And on Anastasia Drew! I wonder if mamma will say now that the palmist didn't know what he was talking about.

(MRS. W. runs in.)

MRS. W. It's all true—every word of it! There is a moving van in front of their door!

MRS. C. Estelle, I never saw anything like the way you behaved.

MRS. W. It was abominable, I know, but I couldn't help it. So don't scold, dear, but try to realize what it means to see a moving van in front of the Drews! Dear me! I'll burst forth into song pretty soon.

JULIA. Hadn't we better call up father, and tell him what has happened? (*Goes to 'phone.*)

MRS. W. She's afraid I'm going to sing.

MRS. C. (*to MRS. W.*). I forgot to tell you that Dick wished you to call him up.

MRS. W. (*to JULIA*). Very well. Call up your father. But don't look at me so reproachfully. (*Puts her hand on JULIA'S shoulder.*) I haven't been a mother to you this day, I know. I've been impatient and impossible! But wait! I'll be a changed woman. Our star of hope has risen over far Kalamazoo. (*Turns to MRS. R.*) If they had taken a place in town, I never would have felt safe.

But Kalamazoo is just right! Do you know, we didn't appreciate dear old grandpa when he was on here last summer. Had I dreamed that the old gentleman was going to put that saving clause in his will, I would have kissed his hand as the hand of a benefactor, and thanked him with tears!

MRS. R. I always admired him—a shrewd, kindly old man.

MRS. W. Shrewd? I should say so. You notice he didn't invite her to come and stay with him until he was dead.

JULIA. Mamma! How absurd!

MRS. W. Not so absurd as it sounds, my dear.

(*Enter RUBY, R.*)

RUBY. The packers have finished with the china and glass. What will they do next?

MRS. W. I forgot all about those men! (*To RUBY.*) Go and tell them to unpack it again.

RUBY. Unpack it again?

JULIA (*at the 'phone*). 6543 Main, please.

MRS. W. Yes. Unpack it again, and put it back in the china closet and on the sideboard. Our plans are changed. We have heard good news. We are not going to move. So hurry and tell them so, and get the house put to rights. (*RUBY stands staring.*) Ruby, don't stare, but go! (*Exit RUBY, R.*) Now I know what Browning means by sympathetic sideboards. He means the kind that are laden with your own china and glass, and that reflect in each polished panel your happy face.

MRS. R. As a member of the Browning class, I am glad to have that explanation. It sounds plausible.

JULIA (*at the 'phone*). Hello! Hold the wire a moment, please. (*To MRS. W.*) Do you wish to tell father?

MRS. W. Do I wish to tell father? My dear, I wish to tell everybody. I am dying to scream it from the housetop!

JULIA. You'll be heard all right without going to the housetop.

MRS. W. Isn't it strange that a bubbling, enthusiastic woman like myself should have such a cold-blooded daughter?

JULIA. Mamma!

MRS. W. (*smoothing JULIA'S hair*). There, my angel! Just wait till you see the new hat—two of them that I am going to get you. And, dear, I haven't told you how sorry I am about that unfortunate mix-up. Still that hat was dreadfully heavy, and I read in the papers—(*turns to MRS. R. and MRS. C.*) did you see that?—about a woman who fainted under the weight of her head-gear. (*To JULIA.*) So you see—that perhaps—after all——

JULIA (*interrupting*). Father is waiting.

MRS. W. Well, he is going to get something worth while waiting for. (*Takes JULIA'S place at the 'phone.*) Hello! Yes. (*Pause.*) Never mind that just now. Listen to me, and keep a good grip on that office chair the while. Are you ready? (*Pause.*) The Drews are going to move. (*Pause; raises her voice.*) The Drews!

JULIA. S-s-s-h!

MRS. W. (*at the 'phone*). Yes! Yes! (*Aside.*) He is fairly stuttering, he is so excited. I'd give a hundred dollars to see his face. (*At the 'phone.*) What's that? (*Pause.*) Yes. You can come home to-night and sleep like a Christian in your own bed—just think of it!

MRS. C. One would suppose he had spent his life camping out.

MRS. W. (*at the 'phone*). Celebrate, did you say? I am certainly in the mood. (*Pause.*) Yes. The four of us, Mrs. Roberts, Rachel, the Cherub (*JULIA makes a moué*), and myself.

MRS. R. What's this?

MRS. W. (*to MRS. R.*). Luncheon in town and the matinée.

MRS. R. (*protesting feebly*). But——

MRS. W. Now don't say no. Just imagine how you would have felt, if it had happened when you lived in number forty.

MRS. R. I give in.

MRS. W. (*at the 'phone*). Yes. We'll all be there on the 12:10. (*Pause.*) Too good to be true? Almost. (*Pause.*) Not just now. I'll tell you all about it afterward. Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver.*) Hurry and get your things on, ladies. We haven't a minute to spare. I'll see about the packers and tell Ruby.

(MRS. W. goes toward L. door. MRS. R. takes her wraps.)

JULIA. Wouldn't it be better to wait until they are gone before we celebrate?

MRS. C. (*to MRS. W., with a touch of anxiety*). You feel perfectly sure on that point, don't you?

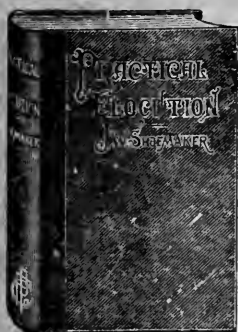
MRS. W. Perfectly.

MRS. C. Thank goodness! (*As they leave the room.*) I, for one, shall be glad to see the last of "Those Dreadful Drews."

CURTAIN



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